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THESIS

SUICIDE TERRORISM IN AMERICA?:
THE COMPLEX SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THIS PHENOMENON
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

by

Richard J. Fleece

December 2012

Thesis Co-Advisors: David Brannan
Anders Strindberg

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This research applies social identity and intergroup relations theory to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism and develops a framework that can be used to better understand the threat of suicide terrorism and the implications for United States homeland security. Suicide terrorism is growing worldwide and is becoming more geographically diverse. Traditional studies of suicide terrorism tend to seek causal explanations of the phenomenon. This research uses a grounded theory approach to study the phenomenon that seeks to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful framework for understanding.

The findings of this research recommend an alternate framework for understanding suicide terrorism based on the application of social identity theory and intergroup relations theory. Through the identification of alternative normative accounts in the choices that individuals make, this research is able to identify the complex social conditions of suicide terrorism and argues that the phenomenon is driven by powerful socio-cultural systems that prey on an individual's basic identity needs.

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AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

Richard J. Fleece
Assistant to the Special Agent in Charge, United States Secret Service
B.A., University of Maryland, 1990

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December 2012

Author: Richard J. Fleece

Approved by: David Brannan
                 Thesis Co-Advisor

                 Anders Strindberg
                 Thesis Co-Advisor

                 Daniel Moran
                 Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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This research applies social identity and intergroup relations theory to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism and develops a framework that can be used to better understand the threat of suicide terrorism and the implications for United States homeland security. Suicide terrorism is growing worldwide and is becoming more geographically diverse. Traditional studies of suicide terrorism tend to seek causal explanations of the phenomenon. This research uses a grounded theory approach to study the phenomenon that seeks to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful framework for understanding.

The findings of this research recommend an alternate framework for understanding suicide terrorism based on the application of social identity theory and intergroup relations theory. Through the identification of alternative normative accounts in the choices that individuals make, this research is able to identify the complex social conditions of suicide terrorism and argues that the phenomenon is driven by powerful socio-cultural systems that prey on an individual's basic identity needs.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPOST   Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism

LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

PKK   Kurdistan Workers' Party

SIT   Social Identity Theory

SITE   Site Institute—The Search for International Terrorist Entities

START   National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism

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I. INTRODUCTION

If we cannot understand why normal people turn to violence, we cannot hope to stop that violence, to reduce it, or to immunize against it. If we cannot understand radicalization, we will have to live with its effects including the extremes of terrorism.[1]

A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Thesis Statement

This research applies social identity and intergroup relations theory to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism and develops a framework that can be used to better understand the threat of suicide terrorism and the implications for United States homeland security.

There has never been a suicide bombing campaign on American soil.[2] In 2005, just a few years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bruce Hoffman argued that the United States would see more suicide attacks in the future. Hoffman wrote that suicide bombings are the ultimate "smart bomb," and that the suicide aspect was essential to the success and stunning impact of the 9/11 attacks.[3] Was Hoffman incorrect in his assessment? It could be argued that enhanced homeland security measures put in place since September 11 have precluded transnational suicide terrorists activities from occurring, but what about homegrown violent extremists within the United States. Several years before September 2001, Oklahoma City bomber and United States citizen Timothy McVeigh contemplated turning the bombing into a "suicide mission" but decided against the tactic.[4] Why haven't homegrown violent extremists used suicide terrorism as a course of action?

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[1] C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to them and Us*, ed. , trans. Oxford University Press, 2011)., kindle location 151.

[2] For the purposes of this research, the term "campaign" will refer to an organized course of action to achieve a particular goal.

[3] B. Hoffman, "Defending America Against Suicide Terrorism," *Three Years After, Next Steps in theWar on Terror* (2005), 21–22.

[4] Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing*, 1st ed. (New York: Regan Books, 2001), 16. 332.

Thirty-two people have been killed in terrorist attacks in the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks at the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The most lethal attack, Nidal Hassan's killing of 13 people at Ft. Hood, occurred as recently as 2009.[5] Furthermore, a study of Islamic radicalization found that between 1989 and 2011, 211 individuals have radicalized in North America to the point of supporting violence. Many of these individuals (80 percent) began their radicalization after the events of September 11.[6]

Law enforcement is currently challenged by the efforts to detect homegrown terrorism. The autonomous nature of radicalization sometimes causes homegrown terrorism to proliferate in isolation from external networks.[7] This challenge requires the United States to address the realities of the phenomenon of homegrown radicalization, the continued threat that transnational terrorism presents, and more specifically, to understand the threat posed by the proliferation of suicide terrorism—one of the most deadly forms of terrorism.[8] This research examines the phenomenon of suicide terrorism using Social Identity Theory (SIT) as a framework for analysis and discusses the implications of the findings for U.S. homeland security.

Why would we want to view this phenomenon from a social identity perspective? Oftentimes, terrorists are viewed as "psychos" or "mad men," an analysis that does not take into consideration the impact of cultural and personal relationships.[9] They appear to be insane because no sane person would commit such an act. Terrorists kill and injure for reasons that are incomprehensible.[10] By analyzing the terrorist mindset within a defective

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[5] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, *Fact Sheet: Violent Extremism in the U.S.* (College Park, MD: START, (2011)), 1.

[6] Ibid., 2.

[7] Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, *Homegrown Terrorism: The Threat to Military Communities Inside the United States,* First Session, 112th Congress, 2011, 7.

[8] National Counterterrorism Center, *2011 NCTC Report on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: National Counterterrorism Center, (2011), 13.

[9] C. McCauley, "Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism," in *Psychology of Terrorism*, eds. B. M. Bongar and others (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13–31, 14–15.

[10] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy,* Greenwood Publishing Group, (2006), 1.

context, the main approach to understanding terrorists often misinterpret their behaviors.[11] For example, these analyses often view terrorism as a static phenomenon that does not take into consideration factors such as the terrorist group's cultural background and ideology.[12] Frameworks, such as Social Identity Theory, provide a broad explanation for understanding these groups in general, and their patterns of behavior. It is a framework that is useful in understanding how group behavior is affected by intergroup relations and conflict.

Social Identity Theory explains that, by belonging to a group, individuals can attain strong feelings of self worth. Accompanying these feelings are emotions, such as pride of your group.[13] These feelings of self worth and pride can be achieved through an individual's perception that his group is attempting to attain a legitimate goal, such as enhancing the welfare of the citizens of its country. By understanding the mindset of the terrorist, one takes an important step towards stopping terrorism.[14]

Existing literature on the subject, however, has attempted to explain the proliferation of suicide terrorism by focusing on one dimension of the phenomenon. For example, Bruce Hoffman argues that suicide terrorism has traditionally occurred in environments that place an emphasis on communal bonds and have a history of self-sacrifice.[15] Self-sacrifice, however, is found commonly in history and found often occurring in cultures that have not had a single instance of suicide terrorism.[16] Suicide bombing campaigns have occurred in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Chechnya, and Sri Lanka. Each country has a distinct culture and history. A one-dimensional analysis is insufficient in finding common enabling conditions that allows suicide terrorism to occur and flourish. There are no simple causal explanations

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[11] Anders Strindberg, "Social Identity Theory and the Study of Terrorism." Unpublished Research, 1.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 2.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004), 243–281, 253.

[16] H. D. Barlow, *Dead for Good: Martyrdom and the Rise of the Suicide Bomber,* Paradigm Pub, (2007).

for terrorism because the causal factors tend to be complex.[17] A full explanation of suicide bombing must take into consideration three interactive components: The individuals that execute the missions, the organizations that design the missions, and the societies that support the missions.[18] It is the interactive nature of these three components that must be studied and a framework must be developed that can lead to a better understanding of this complex phenomenon.

With this in mind, it is important to ask the question; what are the social and cultural conditions that allow suicide terrorism to occur and can a framework be developed through the research of social identity and intergroup relations, which could be used by homeland security officials to better understand the proliferation of this growing threat and the implications for homeland security?

B.   BACKGROUND AND NEED

Today's threat environment, as it relates to suicide terrorism, is constantly changing and deadly. In order to understand how this phenomenon can impact security at home, it is necessary to analyze global patterns of suicide attacks. In the six-year period from 2004 to 2009, there were 1,833 suicide attacks, out of which 92 percent were directed against the United States.[19] Moreover, suicide terrorism has become more common and geographically diverse. In 2011, there were over 10,000 terrorism related attacks in seventy countries. These attacks resulted in 12,500 deaths.[20] The most lethal form of terrorist attack in the world, which accounted for 2,670 deaths, was suicide bombings. Suicide attacks accounted for 2.7 percent of all terrorist attacks, but accounted for 21 percent of the deaths related to terrorist attacks.[21] Furthermore, from 1990 until

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[17] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What they Experience and Why they Come to Destroy*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006)., 99–100. Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346, 178.

[18] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346, 178.

[19] Robert Anthony Pape, James K. Feldman, and Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop it* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 349, 2.

[20] National Counterterrorism Center, *2011 NCTC Report on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: National Counterterrorism Center, [2011])., 9.

[21] Ibid., 13.

1999, there were 106 suicide-bombing attacks in fifteen different countries that claimed the lives of over 1,500 people. In comparison, from 2000 until 2010, there were 2,114 suicide-bombing attacks in thirty-two different countries that killed over 26,000 people.[22]

As grave as these statistics are, a campaign of suicide terrorism on American soil would have a devastating effect on the citizens of this country. Large numbers of fatalities, extensive damage to property, and a severely diminished faith in homeland security would be the expected consequences of a suicide terrorism campaign. Furthermore, as evidenced by the effects of the suicide attacks of 9/11; the behavior of citizens following an event can have a deleterious effect on the economy.[23] Suicide terrorism is a successful form of coercion that is intended to make governments concede to demands.[24] Suicide operations are inexpensive to execute,[25] convey an image of strength, and build solidarity among groups.[26] Research is needed to better understand this phenomenon in order to determine if it could be carried out in a similar campaign manner with the same results in the United States.

C.   RESEARCH QUESTION

What effective framework can be developed through the application of social identity and intergroup relation theories to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, which could be used by U.S. homeland security officials to better understand the threat of suicide terrorism?

D.   SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FIELD

This research is timely, essential, and will lead to an understanding of the social and cultural conditions of suicide terrorism. The extant literature on the subject clearly identifies the characteristics and logic terrorist groups use when employing suicide

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[22] "CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism"" http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search_results.php (accessed 7/15/2012, 2012).

[23] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 261., 183.

[24] R. A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003), 343–361., 344.

[25] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Revised and expanded edition ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 432., 132–133.

[26] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281, 250.

terrorism. One of the main characteristics of the act of suicide terrorism is the dependence on the death of the perpetrator in the execution of the mission. Suicide terrorism conveys the group's message in a way that traditional methods of warfare never could. It forces the enemy to see the level of commitment demonstrated by the terror group members and suggests that if they are willing to blow themselves up in an effort to make their political point—then there is little hope of defending against their attacks.

In addition, existing research has tried to "define" the radicalization process both abroad and in the United States in an effort to determine if there is a specific indoctrination path that individuals follow in becoming terrorists. While it is interesting to see how a person moves from earnest believer in a particular ideology to a position where they are willing to act illegally—perhaps even murder—on behalf of that belief, the path described is not universal.[27] The research shows that there are many radicalizing paths, and that they differ based on social grouping, individual history, context and setting and religious and cultural background.[28]

Research has been done on the psychological factors associated with choosing suicide terrorism as a method for conveying the message of the group.[29] And while some of the research identified here serves as a background and contextual base—no previous research answers the specific issues addressed in this effort. It is not clear if the environment, social backing, and other essential elements necessary to sustain a suicide terrorism campaign are attendant in the United States. This research starts the process of uncovering that difficult question.

Research has found that the combination of indoctrination and the influence of a charismatic religious or political leader create a bonded group and establish the proper

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[27] C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us, ed. trans. Oxford University Press, 2011), kindle location 4532.

[28] F. M. Moghaddam, From the Terrorists' Point of View: What they Experience and Why they Come to DestroyGreenwood Publishing Group, 2006).; M. D. Silber, A. Bhatt and New York (NY). Police Dept, Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown ThreatPolice Department, 2007).; Ami Pedahzur, Suicide Terrorism (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 261.

[29] Larry H. Pastor, "Countering the Psychological Consequences of Suicide Terrorism," Psychiatric Annals 34, no. 9 (2004), 701–707.

conditions for suicide terrorism to flourish.[30] This runs counter to what many believe is a form of terrorism unique to Islamic extremists. For example, from 1987 to 2009, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an ethnic Tamil terrorist organization that conducted over one hundred suicide terrorist attacks, was responsible for the deaths of over 1,500 people during their campaign for independence in Sri Lanka.[31] The mostly Hindu Tamil population comprises approximately 16 percent of Sri Lanka.[32] Vellupillai Prabhakaran headed the LTTE and was a charismatic leader, who was responsible for the sect-like feature of the organization and a principle source of inspiration for the suicide terrorists themselves.[33]

In addition, Hoffman and McCormick argue that suicide terrorism cannot take place without the presence of enabling social norms, such as popular acceptance of suicide terrorism and martyrdom by the collective.[34] This thesis explores these and other enabling social norms and conditions necessary for sustaining suicide campaigns.

This research provides an application of social identity and intergroup relations theory to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. Moghaddam writes that the starting premise of social identity theory holds that individuals are motivated to achieve a positive and distinct identity. Moghaddam argues that rather than being inherited, these needs are flexible and can best be understood in the "context of cultural evolution."[35] This thesis examines suicide terrorism within the context of these social and cultural conditions and uses the basic tenants of social identity theory to draw conclusions.

This research will fill a gap in the discourse on suicide terrorism. Specifically, this thesis analyzed statements from Islamic radical Middle Eastern suicide bombers, who

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[30] Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," Science 299, no. 5612 (2003), 1534–1534–9., 1534.

[31] "CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism " http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search_results.php (accessed 7/15/2012, 2012).

[32] Lewis, The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing, 346, 89.

[33] Ami Pedahzur, Suicide Terrorism (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 261., 71.

[34] Hoffman and McCormick, Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack, 243–281, 250.

[35] Fathali M. Moghaddam, Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 207, 102.

have used suicide terrorism in the past, and identifies if they are motivated for their acts by the need to achieve a positive and distinct identity. These results are analyzed and used to develop a framework that can be applied to the social and cultural conditions in the United States.

E. PARAMETERS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This central premise of this research examines the question of whether social identify and intergroup relations theory can be applied to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism in order to gain a better understanding of the act and to develop a framework that can be used to compare to the positioning of radicalized Islamic fundamentalist individuals in American society. It is a starting point to better understanding if radicalized United States citizens could conduct a campaign of suicide terrorism on American soil. It is not intended to explain the actions of foreign actors on American soil. The research focuses on sociological conditions and factors and does not attempt to examine the psychological factors associated with a person's decision to commit an act of suicide. Finally, this thesis did not produce an absolute solution to the proliferation of suicide terrorism. This research is intended to direct and stimulate discourse on the social identity and positioning of radicalized Islamic fundamentalist United States' citizens within the context of American society, the ways in which homeland security policy makers seek to understand phenomenon, such as suicide terrorism, and the development of strategies used to combat terrorism.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

1. Chapter II–Literature Review

This thesis will begin with a literature review on suicide terrorism. The researcher is aware of the need to remain objective and not let the existing perspectives and research findings bias the data collection. In order to foster conceptualization of the phenomenon, the literature review will be used as an analytic tool. The purpose of the literature review will be to provide a rich source of information from which the researcher will be able to begin the operations of asking questions and making comparisons of his data. In addition, it will give the researcher ideas for theoretical sampling.

2. Chapter III–Method and Research Design

This chapter of the thesis will describe in detail the method and design of this research project. The researcher utilized the concepts of Social Identity and Intergroup Relations theories within a grounded theory research methodology in order to identify emerging concepts and ideas.

3. Chapter IV–Analysis and Findings

This chapter of the thesis will include an analysis section and a findings section. The analysis section will describe in detail the principles of the research. The findings section will analyze the last will and testaments of "successful" suicide bombers and begin to develop a framework around which homeland security officials can better understand the social and cultural conditions necessary for suicide terrorism to exist.

4. Chapter V–Discussion

The discussion chapter will identify the implications of the findings of this research to homeland security. This chapter will discuss how these social and cultural conditions can be interpreted utilizing social identity theory, why it is important, why it is necessary for policy makers to understand the social and cultural conditions necessary for suicide terrorism to exist, and why developing a better understanding of the phenomenon can lead to better homeland security policies. This chapter will also examine some prevailing strategies to deter suicide terrorism and make a recommendation for an improved framework for analysis and development of policies.

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II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

> Suicide bombing provides a weapon that is uniquely suited to the needs
> and capabilities of terrorist groups, providing them with the best of both
> worlds: the precision and sophistication of the most complex technologies
> as well as relative simplicity and reliability.[36]

In October of 1983, a truck loaded with explosives was driven into the lobby of a U.S. Marine Corps housing complex in Beirut, Lebanon. The truck detonated, killing 241 military personnel and injuring 100 others.[37] At the time, this suicide-bombing incident was the deadliest terrorist attack against a U.S. target in history and signaled the beginning of what has since become the deadliest form of terrorism.[38] Both secular and religious groups have used this tactic with success, and suicide terrorism has become more common and geographically diverse.[39] There have been over 2,000 suicide bombings over the past 25 years and the number of incidents has grown greatly over the past decade.[40]

It is argued that the United States will not remain immune from the threat of suicide terrorism. The potential for these attacks would be diverse. Terrorist groups would embrace high-value symbolic targets, such as buildings or installations, high-value human targets, such as the President of the United States, and deliberately target the public at stadiums, shopping malls, buses, trains, and subways. The research assumes that the main suicide threat in the United States will come from radical Islamic jihadists, with al Qaeda representing the most serious threat.[41] As stated in the recent National Strategy

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[36] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346, 255.

[37] Ibid., 47; H. D. Barlow, *Dead for Good: Martyrdom and the Rise of the Suicide Bomber* Paradigm Pub, 2007), 130–131. Ibid., 75.

[38] "CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism " http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php (accessed 7/15/2012, 2012).

[39] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261.

[40] Philip E. Kapusta, Suicide Bombers in CONUS Command and General Staff College, Advanced Military Studies Program, 2007), 30–31.

[41] Bruce Hoffman et al., *Preparing for Suicide Terrorism, A Primer for American Law Enforcement Agencies and Officers* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation,[2004]). Vii–viii.

for Counterterrorism, the United States also identifies al Qaeda as its paramount threat. The source of the threat has shifted, however, from the core al Qaeda group in Afghanistan and Pakistan, towards those groups associated, but separate from the main group. The strategy recognizes the deliberate efforts of al Qaeda to inspire individuals in the United States to conduct terrorist acts of their own.[42] U.S. security concerns, therefore, require that the social and cultural conditions that allow suicide terrorism to occur in other countries be understood in relation to conditions in the United States that could encourage radicalized Islamic fundamentalists to conduct suicide terrorism here.

Understanding the characteristics, strategy, psychology, and social conditions of suicide terrorism is an important primer in the analysis of this phenomenon. In a review of the literature related to suicide terrorism, one is able to find an abundance of quality research that assists the reader in gaining a better understanding of this growing phenomenon. There is also, however, as much information that taken alone can mislead a reader in their understanding of the phenomenon, and therefore, misguide effective policymaking. For example, "single variable explanations," such as Robert Pape's argument that suicide terrorism is a strategic approach taken by terrorist groups in response to foreign occupation, fails to take into consideration the complex history and organizational strategy of suicide bombings.[43] Based on Pape's analysis, one could reasonably conclude that it would be very unlikely that a suicide terrorism campaign could occur in the United States unless a foreign government occupied it. Lewis disagrees with the single variable explanation because of the unwarranted assumption that "one explanation for suicide bombings can be applied to a broad range of cultures and societies with minimal modification." Lewis argues that the phenomenon is extremely complex and cannot be reduced to a "single variable explanation."[44]

Moreover, there is a "fundamental attribution error" towards psychopathology when discussing suicide terrorism. After the events of 9/11, President George W. Bush

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[42] White House, "National Strategy for Counterterrorism 2011," (2011). 1.

[43] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346, 14.

[44] Ibid.

branded the suicide hijackers "evil cowards" and Senator John Warner stated that those who perform the act of suicide terrorism are "not rational."[45] Pedahzur argues that Western scholars find it hard to understand what compels a person to carry out a suicide attack and assume that the cause must stem from some type of mental pathology.[46] Lewis writes that the "focus on the mindset of the individual bombers has precluded understanding of the organizational character of suicide terrorism for many years."[47] McCauley concludes that research has found little evidence that terrorists suffer from psychopathology and sums his argument up nicely, when he writes, "…terrorists emerge out of normal psychology of emotional commitment to cause and comrades." McCauley makes the argument that terrorists who operate in groups are very unlikely to suffer from serious psychopathology.[48]

The present research is directed toward identifying the social and cultural conditions that make suicide terrorism a viable form of resistance for terrorist groups and the implications these conditions can have on U.S. homeland security. The literature review is an analysis of the extensive research that will examine the multi-dimensional framework of suicide terrorism, which includes the individual suicide terrorists, the terrorist organizations, and the societies in which they operate.

A. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

The U.S. Department of State defines terrorism as "…premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."[49] Pape finds that suicide terrorism is the most aggressive form of terrorism because the perpetrator does not expect

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[45] Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299, no. 5612 (2003), 1534–1539.

[46] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 261.

[47] Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 5.

[48] C. McCauley, "Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism," in *Psychology of Terrorism*, eds. B. M. Bongar et al.(New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13–31, 14.

[49] Department of State Website, accessed 11/27/11, http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2000/2419.htm.

to survive, and the success of the mission depends on the death of the perpetrator.[50] This aspect of suicide terrorism is very important because it signals to the group's enemy and the group's constituency that the mission is of such high importance that the perpetrators are willing to give their own lives for the successful execution. This research suggests that suicide terrorism can be defined as an act that is intended to influence a large audience by the aggressive use of politically motivated violence, during which the perpetrator intends or expects to die.

In addition, research has determined that the targets of the mission are not the only victims of the violence.[51] The perpetrators also target those that witness the violence and are psychologically affected. Pastor, Atran, and Hoffman and McCormick have found that the public's fear of the act of suicide terrorism has a great effect on society.[52] Pedahzur argues that anxiety can spread through society and can reduce the faith that citizens have in their government's ability to protect them. The government in turn faces a constrained choice in which they have to appear that they are protecting their citizens.[53] McCauley writes that terrorists want their enemy to "spend time and money on security" and to "transfer resources from other productive purposes."[54] Furthermore, Pastor states that a general lack of understanding of the act contributes to this effect. Terrorist groups count on the media attention gained from this form of terrorism to enhance this fear. Pastor also writes that resilience to this form of terrorism can be gained through education and insight. He further concludes that those citizens must constantly be

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[50] R. A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003), 343–361.

[51] Scott Atran, "*Genesis of Suicide Terrorism*," *Science* 299, no. 5612 (2003), 1534–1534-9.; Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004), 243–281.

[52] Ibid.; Atran, *Genesis of Suicide Terrorism*, 1534–1534-9; Larry H. Pastor, "Countering the Psychological Consequences of Suicide Terrorism," *Psychiatric Annals* 34, no. 9 (2004), 701–707.

[53] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 261.

[54] C. McCauley, "Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism," in *Psychology of Terrorism*, eds. B. M. Bongar and others (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54.

reminded that terrorism is a weapon of the weak against the strong. Pastor's comments could be viewed by some to suggest that those who use the tactic of suicide terrorism are somehow inferior to those that do not.[55]

While these analyses are helpful in defining suicide terrorism, Merari identifies a difficulty in finding a definition based on the lack of understanding the mindset of the perpetrators. Merari argues that the source of confusion can be attributed to understanding whether the perpetrators were seeking to die in the act of terrorism, or if they were simply prepared to die to support their cause.[56] These types of psychological approaches to assess the factors that lead a person to commit an act of suicide terrorism leaves many unanswered questions and are not helpful in defining the characteristics of suicide terrorism. Moreover, they might preclude a proper discussion of the ways to stop suicide terrorism. Pedahzur argues that not a single personality trait common among suicides was found to be prevalent among suicide terrorists.[57]

Researchers have attempted to identify the goals of suicide terrorism, and it is important for the homeland security professional to understand these goals in order for them to understand the complex strategic nature of this form of terrorism. Furthermore, any analysis of these goals is difficult, because research must take into consideration both individual, organizational, and societal goals. Winkates writes that organizational goals are accomplished when the group's reputations are enhanced as a result of its actions. In addition, the grievances of the group are then displayed as a result of the media attention attained that serves to dramatize their cause, gain popular support, and inspire followers.[58]

Research conducted by Lewis suggests that terrorist organizations have created this model, whereby suicide bombing is a socially sanctioned process that transforms

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[55] Larry H. Pastor, "Countering the Psychological Consequences of Suicide Terrorism," *Psychiatric Annals* 34, no. 9 (2004), 701–707.

[56] A. Merari, "The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East," *Origins of Terrorism* 192 (1990).

[57] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 34.

[58] Jim Winkates, "Suicide Terrorism: Martyrdom for Organizational Objectives." *Journal of Third World Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring, 2006; 2006): 87–115.

individuals into technological weapons that were needed as an effective means to counter military superiority. Lewis writes "effectiveness rather than religious obligation drove the use of suicide bombing at the organizational level."[59]

Support conditions to sustain suicide terrorist operations are also necessary. Bloom writes that this support can come in several forms: Food, safe houses, recruits, financial support for weapons, remuneration of families, and to pay operatives.[60] These support structures do not develop without challenges. Hoffman and McCormick explain that "the process of planning, preparing, and carrying out a terrorist campaign raises a group's operational signature, and therefore, increases the risk of detection."[61] For example, Pedahzur and Perlinger found several common features in the study of Palestinian suicide networks. First, was that they were large enough to establish an infrastructure, but small enough to maintain secrecy. Second, all of the networks had hubs that were connected to most of the actors in the group, which suggests the importance of collective support for the network. Third, suicide bombers maintained a peripheral position in the network and contained a relatively low number of ties to others. These Palestinian networks, the researchers found, preferred to dispatch individuals who were of minor importance for suicide operations.[62]

Hoffman and McCormick offer an understanding of the individual goals by explaining that they are attained by the perception of the perpetrators that they will receive rewards. These rewards are gained either by way of a religious payoff after death, or as is seen in the secular groups, through their accomplishments in furtherance of organizational goals.[63] A focus, however, on the religious payoffs can lead to the assumption, commonly held by Westerners that suicide terrorism is a phenomenon that is

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[59] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346, 80.

[60] M. Bloom, "Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism* (2006), 25.

[61] Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004), 243–281. 245.

[62] A. Pedahzur and A. Perliger, "The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks: A Social Network Perspective," *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006), 1987–2008. 1995–1996.

[63] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281.

conducted by crazed religious fanatics. Narratives that describe the suicide bombers receiving seventy-two virgins upon their arrival to heaven can inflame this misconception. In contrast, Pedahzur argues that these attacks are almost always organizational undertakings, and that the individual is "serving the will of the collective."[64]

Pedahzur writes that altruistic suicide terrorism "is the product of situations in which a person undergoes a highly compelling process of integration into a social group that champions the act of suicide. As a result, the interests and desires of the individual become secondary to the group, and he/she will take any step needed to help it advance its goals."[65] We can see from the extant research that suicide terrorism can be better viewed as an organizational tactic that utilizes rational individuals who are motivated to commit their acts due to factors related to social conditions of their environment. But, what are the motivations of the individuals who chose to commit these acts, what is the strategy of the terrorist organizations, and why does society allow suicide terrorism to flourish?

B.   INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS FOR SUICIDE TERRORISM

The individual psychological factors associated with the choice of participating in suicide terrorist activities have been examined with differing results. Merari writes that most psychological theories view personality characteristics as one of the "most important factors in self-destructive behavior." He further argues that a comprehensive study of suicide bombers is difficult because the people who have actually committed the act are unavailable. Merari concludes that the most consistent element seems to be a broken family background.[66] Laqueur, however, finds that virtually all suicide bombers come from large families and have support from their families.[67] Given the date of Merari's research, it is expected that the pool of information on suicide terrorism was

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[64] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261.

[65] Ibid., 7.

[66] Merari, *The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East.* 202–203.

[67] Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 288.

somewhat limited. More recent research by Pedahzur, Pape, Bloom, and Hoffman, however, has found that there is no known profile for the suicide terrorist. They can be young or old, college educated or uneducated, male or female, and socially integrated or isolated.[68] Furthermore, McCauley writes, "that personal frustration associated with poverty, poor education, and unemployment is not a useful explanation of terrorism."[69] Pedahzur argues that "the only partial success in explaining the persistent expansion of suicide terrorism by focusing on the isolated suicide bomber, led social scientist to redirect the spotlight onto the society and culture that produced these terrorist."[70]

Zimbardo supports this argument by examining terrorism from a situational perspective. His basic paradigm illustrates the ease with which otherwise ordinary individuals can be induced into "evil" behavior by powerful under-recognized social situational variables.[71] Zimbardo and McCauley argue that individualistic Western societies tend to attribute observed behavior to internal dispositional factors while ignoring or minimizing the impact of situational variables.[72] As mentioned earlier, this can have an impact on how we approach the development of policies to detect and deter terrorism. Strategies to prevent suicide terrorism begin with an understanding of the organizational motivation process. Zimbardo writes that organizations utilize "a variety of social psychological and motivational principles in turning collective hatred and general frenzy into a dedicated seriously calculated program of indoctrination and

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68 Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261; R. A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003), 343-361.; Bloom, *Motivations for Suicide Terrorism*, 25; B. Hoffman, "Defending America Against Suicide Terrorism," *Three Years After, Next Steps in the War on Terror* (2005).

69 McCauley, *Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism*, 13–31, 17.

70 Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261, 23.

71 Philip G. Zimbardo, "A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil, Understanding How Good People are Transformed into Perpetrators," in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. A. Miller (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004), 21–22.

72 Ibid.; C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us, (*Oxford University Press, 2011).

training for individuals to become youthful 'living martyrs.'"[73] It is this refocus of attention from the individual history and actions of the suicide terrorist towards the cultural and societal factors that enable this phenomenon to grow that will be most helpful in developing a full understanding of suicide terrorism and its process of radicalization.

Suicide terrorists are radicalized at some point prior to the execution of their acts of terrorism. In his 2008 testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, Professor Fathali Moghaddam warned that violent extremism is a growing problem for contemporary societies and will remain a global threat for the next few decades. Moghaddam describes his theory of radicalization by comparing the process to a staircase. The process begins on the ground floor with the more than 1 billion Muslims worldwide experiencing an identity crisis by having to choose between two inadequate identities. The first involves copying the "West," and the second is represented by various kinds of Islamic fundamentalists. In a search to improve their living conditions, these individuals move up the staircase toward radicalization where they come under the influence of persuasive messages that demonize the "West." Some reach higher floors of the staircase by divorcing themselves from morality and justifying terrorism. Reaching the highest levels of the staircase means taking part in or directly supporting terrorism.[74]

Furthermore, law enforcement is now beginning to shift their focus towards this process of radicalization. The New York City Police Department studied the ideologies that motivate individuals to commit acts of terror, as well as the phases of the radicalization process. Their findings identify evidence for distinct phases of radicalization and recognize the difficulty in distinguishing the subtle nature of the behaviors associated with the process.[75]

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[73] Zimbardo, *A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil, Understanding How Good People are Transformed into Perpetrators*, 21, 46.

[74] Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, *Violent Islamist Extremism in Global Context,* 2008.

[75] M. D. Silber, A. Bhatt, and New York (NY). Police Dept, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat,* Police Department, 2007). 5–10.

Pedahzur writes that individuals seek friendship, before they become dedicated to the cause. In some cases, this comradeship seems to be stronger than anything. Pedahzur stresses the importance of social bonds with other people who are committed to a common cause. This radicalization process sees the group go through a long process of peer socialization, strong mutual confidence, and in the end moderate members of the groups sometimes adopt the beliefs of the most extreme members. Pedahzu writes: "They do not exhibit mental pathologies or personal problems; they are simply strongly integrated into the social unit. A successful integration makes the unit and its members the most important factor in their lives, and they are willing to do anything for their friends and the common cause."[76] The power of group identification, McCauley argues, is the foundation of intergroup conflict.[77] Pedahzur and McCauley's research presents a contrasting argument to the view of the suicide bomber as a crazed individual with hatred towards his enemy. This argument can therefore be reformulated and viewed as individuals forming a group in which frustration with an external entity, which significantly contributes to action against this entity.

Terrorists groups use ideology and small-group dynamics to conduct terrorist operations. The individual takes on the cause of the group, whether it is based on religious beliefs, ethnicity, or nationality. These causes give meaning to life. There is no special relationship between suicide terrorism and religion. McCauley supports this argument when he writes, "religion is only one kind of cause in which people can find an answer to mortality."[78]

Pedahzur argues that once the individual is committed to the group, the organizational procedures of devising a suicide operation are performed in a number of parallel steps. An important step in the procedure is the recruitment and training of potential suicide bombers. The most important phase of the training process is the indoctrination of the suicide bombers that includes the prospect of writing a farewell

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[76] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261, 134.

[77] McCauley, *Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism*, 13–31.

[78] Ibid., 19.

letter or videotaped testament to his or her loved ones. From this point on, there is little chance that the bomber will go back on his commitment to the mission because such a step would give rise to condemnation from the organization and the community at large.[79]

C. THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

Suicide terrorist attacks have grown in frequency and lethality since early study of the phenomenon began following the suicide attacks in Lebanon in 1983.[80] Early study of the organizational strategy of suicide terrorism argues that culture and religion were relatively unimportant as factors in determining whether a person or group chose to participate in suicide terrorist activities. Merari suggests that suicide terrorism was conducted by individuals for personal reasons and not in furtherance of any organizational goals, and that there was no evidence to support the notion that individuals chose to participate in suicide terrorist activities based on the influence of a charismatic leader.[81] At the time, suicide attacks represented a small fraction of terrorist activity.

Conversely, more recent research has found that suicide bombings are almost always the product of an organizational process, and argue that the identities of people who chose to commit acts of suicide terrorism are shaped by a larger social context.[82] Strindberg and Wärn support this concept when they write that the resistance of individuals and groups is connected to "complex social networks" and "revolutionary ideologies" that exist based on social roles, norms, and cues.[83] Research of these complex social networks allows the reader to better understand the organizational structures underlying suicide attacks. Research by Kruglanski develops a framework within which

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[79] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 178–181.

[80] "Global Terrorism Database, " http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/ (accessed 7/26/2012, 2012).

[81] Merari, *The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East*. 206–207.

[82] Ami Pedahzur, *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: Globalization of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 202.; Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261; Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281; Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 346.

[83] Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 238, 52–53.

both personal and social organizational motivational factors can be found in a person's quest for significance. They find that personal traumas encourage a "collectivist switch" to justify terrorism, as well as ideological reasons and social pressures.[84] Pedahzur writes that on the personal level, financial and emotional crises, such as the loss of a loved one, are "fair predictors of the willingness to become a suicide bomber."[85] These justifications, while accurate in some instances, do not represent a universal rational for why some individuals choose to commit acts of suicide terrorism. Pedahzur understands this partial understanding and argues that suicide terrorism is a "political phenomenon" that is coordinated and organized by a terrorism group, and that personality and psychological traits play a secondary role in the development of a suicide bomber.[86]

Lewis suggests that one way organizations coordinate these missions is through the use of "symbols and rituals to link their operational goals" to martyrdom's expression of self-sacrifice, which can be found in most communities, especially those that feel they are threatened by some outside force. This mutual feedback, Lewis argues, gives meaning to the individual's death and the general cause for which it is fighting.[87]

Research by Pape also argues that strategically, nonstate terrorist groups choose to continue the use of suicide terrorism because it is a successful form of coercion that is intended to make governments concede to demands.[88] Hoffman and McCormick, however, write that suicide terrorism is a constrained choice because the terrorist group has neither the support, nor the means to display its message politically.[89] If one assumes that the terrorist actors are making rational choices, then their display of violence to coerce government officials to concede to their demands can be viewed as a strategic form of communication. Pedazur argues that on a strategic level most suicide campaigns

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[84] A. W. Kruglanski et al., "Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance," *Political Psychology* 30, no. 3 (2009), 331–357. 353.

[85] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 126.

[86] Ibid., 124–125.

[87] Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 35.

[88] Pape, *The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, 343–361.

[89] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*,243–281.

are meant to bring about political and military changes and will be suspended under certain conditions. Such as when the goals of the organization have been attained, if the side that is being attacked finds effective ways of stopping the suicide terrorism, or if the public the organization seeks to represent makes it clear it does not support the method.[90]

Hoffman and McCormick, Pape, and Madsen have evaluated this strategic "signaling" and found that, in relation to other forms of tactical operations that are available to terrorist groups, it is an effective way for a group to communicate its message.[91] Kapusta and Hoffman, in seeking to identify why it is effective, offer one possible explanation. Suicide operations are inexpensive to execute.[92] As an example, Hoffman states that a typical Palestinian suicide operation costs one hundred and fifty dollars. In addition, Hoffman and McCormick explain that suicide operations cultivate an image of strength. These groups are unable to conduct operations on the battlefield and need to provide a message to both their target audience, as well as their constituents, which display the necessary force to compel.[93] For example, Pedahzur writes that Osama Bin Laden's and al-Qaeda's decision to use large-scale suicide offensives against American targets "was meant to signal to the United States that is was dealing with a highly determined organization that was not deterred by the necessity of engaging in brutal warfare even if it suffered from strategic inferiority," and finds it difficult to accept that his solitary goal was to spread the control of Islam. Pedahzur concludes that Bin Laden wanted to "provoke the Americans into an aggressive response against himself, and paradoxically also to intensify its military involvement in the Middle East."[94] Finally, Hoffman and McCormick conclude that suicide terrorism builds solidarity

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[90] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 45.

[91] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281; Pape, *The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, 343–361; J. Madsen, "Suicide Terrorism: Rationalizing the Irrational," *Strategic Insights* 3, no. 8 (2004), 1–6.

[92] Philip E. Kapusta, *Suicide Bombers in CONUS (*Command and General Staff College, Advanced Military Studies Program, 2007); Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Revised and expanded edition ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 432.

[93] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281.

[94] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261, 116.

among the group's base. Critical to the realization of this benefit, however, is the collective acceptance of the action.[95]

Pedahzur also examined the use of suicide terrorism by the LTTE and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK-Partiy Karkeren Kurdistan) in order to understand whether there is a universal or location-dependent explanation for the use of the tactic. Both groups were headed by "charismatic leaders who were responsible for the sect-like features," and who served as the principle source of inspiration for their followers. Pedahzur argues that both groups felt "powerless" due to stronger military pressure and dispatched suicide terrorists to signal they would not be suppressed. On an organizational level, Pedahzur concludes, the LTTE regarded suicide bombings more as a tactic than an organizational strategy. The LTTE was able to create a significant base of support for itself and succeeded in the use of the tactic, where the PKK was "ideologically remote from large segments of the public it sought to represent" and is seen as having failed. The examination of the LTTE and the PKK also serve to further identify that the use of the tactic is not unique to Islamic fundamentalist groups.[96]

Recent research concludes that terrorists groups have increasingly relied on suicide terrorism to achieve political objectives. For example, a study by Pape found that since 1983 suicide terrorist attacks have occurred worldwide in countries, such as Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Israel, Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Yemen, and the United States.[97] Pape and Feldman argue that instead of religion, the strategic goal of suicide terrorism is to compel democratic states to withdrawal combat forces. The principle cause of suicide terrorism, Pape and Feldman explain, is resistance to foreign occupation.[98] Hoffman and McCormick supported one aspect of Pape and Feldman's claim when they write that since 1983 only 60 percent of the suicide attacks that have

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[95] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281.

[96] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 70, 95–96.

[97] Pape, *The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, 343–361.

[98] Robert Anthony Pape, James K. Feldman, and Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop it* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 349.

been carried out have been conducted by religious groups.[99] Pedahzur, however, finds that the military occupation theory does not explain the tendency for Islamic groups to use suicide bombings against "pro-western moderate Islamic regimes in order to replace them with extreme Islamic ones."[100]

Military occupation alone might not be the most useful explanation for the political conditions of suicide terrorism. As Bloom points out, a case like Japan, where there has been occupation, opposition to U.S. presence, and a historical precedent of suicide attacks, did not resort to the tactic.[101] Laqueur writes that the use of suicide bombings in opposition to military occupation is "certainly true in some cases, but in many cases – from Algeria to Central Asia and the Philippines – it is not."[102] Furthermore, Lewis argues that some governments that have had success in bringing a halt to suicide bombings in recent years have not done so by withdrawing forces, but by intensifying their occupations and defeating or killing their adversaries. For example, Lewis writes that the twenty-six year struggle of the LTTE, which conducted over a hundred suicide bombings, to create a separate homeland in Sri Lanka ended when Sri Lankan armed forces killed LTTE's leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran.[103]

Terrorism, however, is a tactic of a militarily inferior opponent against a superior one. Hoffman and McCormick find that two considerations shape the choice of suicide terrorism as a course of action. The first is a "lack of significant political support in an otherwise open political environment," and the second is the "presence of significant popular support in the absence of alternative means of political expression."[104] Atran provides further explanation of the conditions necessary to conduct these types of operations. A linked group of individuals, who are indoctrinated under charismatic

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99 Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281, 252.

100 Pedahzur, *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: Globalization of Martyrdom*, 3.

101 Bloom, *Motivations for Suicide Terrorism*, 25.

102 Walter Laqueur, "What Makes Them Tick?" *The Washington Post* July 24, 2005.

103 Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 111.

104 Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281, 245.

leaders, commit to die for the common good of "alleviating the community's onerous political and social realities."[105]

Pedahzur writes that the most common form of suicide bombing, preferred by the majority of organizations that have utilized the tactic, is the detonation of an explosive belt directly attached to the militant's body. This tactic is favored over other methods, such as driving a car or truck rigged with explosives and carrying the explosives in some type of carry bag. This type of terrorism is very effective. Research by Pedahzur shows that while the average number of fatalities from terrorist shooting attacks is 2.11 and delaying mechanism attacks is 2.01, the average number of fatalities in a suicide attack where the terrorist carries an explosive laden belt is 8.11. That number jumps to 19.08 when the weapon is an explosive laden car. Furthermore, in most cases the terrorist loses no more than one person in these operations. The primary targets of suicide terrorism are civilian populations, however, military and police installations have also been targeted.[106]

D.   SOCIETAL SUPPORT OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

In his early 1990 study, Merari wrote that "all monotheistic religions promise life after death" and may thus "encourage suicidal behavior," especially if it is carried out for a "righteous cause."[107] For example, Atran writes that as early as 1988, Palestine Islamic Jihad founder Fathi Shiqaqi "established guidelines for "exceptional" martyrdom operations involving human bombs."[108] Furthermore, Hoffman and McCormick write that the systematic use of suicide terrorism traditionally occurs in environments that place an emphasis on communal bonds and have a history of self-sacrifice.[109] Bloom explains that these cultural factors are critical and that children learn from a very young age to understand the glorification of sacrifice in the service of the cause.[110] Many cultures,

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[105]   Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299, no. 5612 (2003), 1534.

[106]   Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 15–9.

[107]   Merari, *The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East,* 197.

[108]   Atran, *Genesis of Suicide Terrorism*, 1534–1539.

[109]   Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–253.

[110]   Bloom, *Motivations for Suicide Terrorism*, 25.

however, that have had historical traditions of self-sacrifice have not seen the proliferation of suicide terrorism. Self-sacrifice traditions alone cannot explain the use of this tactic. Barlow argues that martyrdom always occurs in the context of perceived persecution, exploitation, or oppression. Barlow uses the principles of historical self-sacrifice to justify the use of suicide terrorism today and attempts to cite examples of martyrdom throughout history as precedent for today's phenomenon.[111] Lewis disputes this argument by asserting that historical martyrs accepted suffering for themselves without inflicting harm on others. Lewis writes that suicide bombing cannot be understood by examining individual martyrdom only.[112] Barlow's argument places too much emphasis on individual factors related to the choice of suicide terrorism in response to persecution and fails to fully consider social and organizational motivations for the use of the tactic.

Hoffman and McCormick argue that there must be an acceptance of suicide terrorism by the collective in order to enable this social norm. They find that popular acceptance of suicide tactics is an essential prerequisite for a group to advance its position of killing its membership, while at the same time continuing to find future volunteers.[113] Lewis writes,

> For suicide bombing to be effective as a coercive strategy directed against an adversary, the bombers must be understood by that adversary as being representative of the mindset of their community. If the entire group is thought to be willing to fight to the death, the phenomenon becomes intimidating; alternatively, if the bombers are seen as being aberrant or pathological, the effect is greatly diminished.[114]

Pedahzur also arrives at the conclusion that the decision to mobilize suicide bombers cannot take place unless there is a social environment that approves of the method. Furthermore, the social environment, Pedahzur writes, will significantly

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[111] H. D. Barlow, *Dead for Good: Martyrdom and the Rise of the Suicide Bomber (*Paradigm Pub, 2007).

[112] Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 346.

[113] Hoffman and McCormick, *Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack*, 243–281.

[114] Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 346. 185.

facilitate the potential suicide bomber in his enlistment to the mission. This important factor can contribute greatly to a person's feeling of having a positive and distinct identity through the participation in suicide terrorism. In addition, the death of a martyr must be a collective loss for the organization, as well as the collective and the act of self-sacrifice needs to balance out the killing of civilians in the eyes of the collective.[115]

A collective sense of historical injustice has also been found in groups that execute suicide terrorist actions. Atran found that political subservience and social humiliation are perceived contexts in which suicide bombers express themselves.[116] These factors can develop into communal bonds necessary for the growth of suicide terrorism. Strindberg and Wärn write, "[a] seemingly endless cycle of violence and counter-violence taught the mainstream of the Palestinian movement that in order to actualize their humanity – to become fully equal to their oppressors – violent action, not subservient negotiation, was required of them." It follows that these collective feelings of oppression and the resulting sacrifice can be necessary conditions for suicide terrorism to flourish within a community or group.[117]

What are the conditions that enable a society to support the phenomenon? Pedahzur argues that a survey of areas in the world where suicide terrorism has emerged finds a relationship with a long-standing conflict with a powerful enemy that has inflicted pain on that society. He argues that certain societies perceive themselves as weak, hopeless, and oppressed by this powerful enemy, and that they feel empowered when suicide terrorism inflicts pain, confusion, and damage to the aggressor. Innocent citizens, including fellow religious or ethnic citizens, are sometimes killed in these operations.[118] Barlow argues that militant Islamic organizations justify this issue by redefining the victims as apostates or making the victim part of the unavoidable collateral damage of the

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[115] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261.

[116] Atran, *Genesis of Suicide Terrorism*, 1534–1539.

[117] Strindberg and Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance*, 238. 49.

[118] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261.

cause.[119] Pedahzur describes suicide terrorism as a feedback process between an organization and its constituency that is necessary for a sustained campaign to survive. This cycle can be broken in one of two ways according to Pedahzur, the organizations leadership decides that suicide terrorism is no longer effective or the appeal of martyrdom diminishes because the community sees a change in external circumstance.[120]

E.   SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY, INTERGROUP RELATIONS, AND THE STUDY OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

Strindberg writes that "because SIT provides *a broad analytical framework for understanding groups in general*, rather than a content-specific explanation of a single group or type of group, it can be used to frame analyses of any given terrorist group, across the spectrum of cultures and societies (Emphasis in original)."[121] Social identity theory and the study of intergroup relations will be useful in examining the phenomenon of suicide terrorism because as McCauley writes, "Self sacrifice is not self-evident; it has to be constructed in the public eye."[122]

Tajfel offers the following definition of social identity: "Social identity will be understood as that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." The study of intergroup relations examines the roles played by social identity in the ways individuals form groups and interact with other groups in a variety of relationships.[123] Tajfel, writing on intergroup relations, suggests that two components are necessary, and one component is frequently associated with them, in order to achieve identification with a group. The two necessary components are: A cognitive one or awareness of membership, and an evaluative one,

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119 Barlow, *Dead for Good: Martyrdom and the Rise of the Suicide Bomber.*

120 Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 261.

121 Strindberg, Anders. "Social Identity Theory and the Study of Terrorism." Unpublished Research, 1.

122 McCauley and Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*, Kindle location 3824.

123 H. Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 7Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982), 2.

where awareness of membership is given value. The third component is an emotional stake in the awareness and evaluations.[124]

Moghaddam argues that when examining the path that individuals take towards radicalization; the most important feature is how people feel about and interpret their personal and collective identities. Moghaddam suggests that it is the perceived feelings rather than the actual conditions that are most important.[125] The focus on identity begins with what Moghaddam describes as an answer to the question, "What sort of person am I?" From this question, an individual begins his link with the group. For example, answers could be based on religion, ethnicity, or nationality. "I am Muslim," "I am African-American," or "I am German."[126] Turner argues that individuals structure their perceptions of themselves and others by means of these social categories, and the processes related to these perceptions produce group behavior. Turner also hypothesizes that the possibility exists that social identity may function nearly to the exclusion of personal identity. In other words, our self-image might be based solely on our membership in groups. Critical to this process is that once individuals define themselves as members of a group, there is pressure for them to assume the characterization of the group as positive.[127] Moghaddam writes this is one of the basic tenants of social identity theory, and that any criteria can be used to determine a positive identity.[128] Once the group is defined as positive, individuals assign the norms of the group to themselves, and their category in the membership of the group becomes salient.[129]

[124] Henri Tajfel, "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations," *Annual Review of Psychology* 33, no. 1 (02, 1982), 1.

[125] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy (*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006). 46.

[126] Fathali M. Moghaddam, *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 207. 89–90.

[127] J. Turner, "Towards a Cognitive Redifinition of the Social Group," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Tajfel, Vol. 7, (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982). 16.

[128] Moghaddam, *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context*, 207.

[129] Turner, *Towards a Cognitive Redifinition of the Social Group.* 94.

There is, however, also a need for distinctiveness between one's own group in comparison to others. Moghaddam offers that individuals determine the positiveness and distinctiveness of the groups to which they belong by making intergroup comparisons and that each culture guides the individuals with respect to which targets are "correct."[130] Deschamps writes that "a group has no existence but in relation to other groups." He argues that a group becomes a group by having common characteristics, and that groups acquire significance in the perceived differences from other groups.[131] McCauley argues that groups become radicalized by competition with other groups.[132] Lewis supports this thinking when he argues that terrorist groups escalate violence in order to create a distinct group identity and attempt to outdo or outbid a rival group. For example, in Lebanon, Hizballah escalated violence in the form of suicide bombings in order to elevate itself above rival group Amal. This concept, however, is not consistent with the LTTE, who had already eliminated its main rivals when it began its use of suicide attacks. Lewis explains this inconsistency by arguing that the escalation of violence does not cause suicide bombing. Groups escalate violence to establish identity and suicide terrorism is the ultimate way to establish this distinct identity.[133]

Groups can display in-group conflict as well. Lewis cites as an example, the LTTE's ruthlessness in the use of violence against members of its own ethnic community. LTTE members who committed violations of the group's rules were executed. Lewis writes that the combination of fear and respect drove the group towards an unwavering commitment to its leader Prabhakaran[134]. McCauley argues that this type

130 F. M. Moghaddam, "Interobjectivity: The Collective Roots of Individual Consciousness and Social Identity," in *Individuality and the Group: Advances in Social Identity*, eds. T. Postmes and J. JettenSage Publications Ltd, 2006), 163.

131 J. Deschamps, "Social Identity and Relations of Power between Groups," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Tajfel, Vol. 7Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982), 87.

132 McCauley and Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us,* Kindle location 2305.

133 Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 78–79.

134 Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing,* 94.

of in-group dynamic works the same as out-group competition in developing high cohesion within the group.[135]

McCauley writes, "The primary source of status in a group in conflict is an individual's contribution toward group success."[136] Turner argues that the need for a positive self-image leads to comparisons within the group and a need to differentiate from others.[137] Suicide terrorism can also provide a way for members of the group to distinguish themselves within the group. Moreover, if a group is unable to provide a positive identity for its members, they might be inclined to seek membership in another group. Strindberg writes that if membership in some other "out-group" with which the terrorist group competes is seen as more positive than their own "in-group," then this could lead to defections from the "in-group" and possible disintegration of the group.[138] Groups must consider this in their organizational planning and find strategies to keep their "in-group" in tact. One way to accomplish this is seen in the rituals of terrorist groups. Lewis argues that martyrdom is a powerful organizational tool that "binds members of one belief system and sets them apart from believers in another." These terrorist groups use life and death rituals and symbols to "create group solidarity and validate sacrifices that individuals made for the community." Lewis writes that the deeds of the martyrs are observed by the community through programming, such as videotape testaments and become part of the public discourse. These rituals and symbols enhance the capacity of individuals to take their own lives. Martyrdom serves a strategic purpose, asserting a group's value, establishing group identity, and "providing the moral justification for killing others."[139]

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[135] McCauley and Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us,* Kindle location 2001.

[136] Ibid., Kindle location 2490.

[137] Turner, *Towards a Cognitive Redifinition of the Social Group,* 27–28.

[138] Strindberg, Anders. "Social Identity Theory and the Study of Terrorism." Unpublished Research, 5.

[139] Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, 37–42.

Moghaddam argues that rather than being fixed and innate, this identity need for a positive and distinct social identity is malleable and "created by social demands."[140] Brown and Ross refer to this activity as a "battle of acceptance" and argues that there is a dynamic search for positive distinctiveness, which requires recognition from other groups in the social order and that without this recognition, "more vigorous attempts at differentiation will be expected."[141] McCauley writes that there is usually a sense of crisis associated with a threat that is involved in this battle.[142] Moghaddam suggests that the source of the identity need must come from the "in-group" not the "out-group" and that, as an example, Islamic communities are confronted with a threat of imported cultural systems and identities that could preclude them from retaining a distinct identity.[143]

What is important to the present research is the individual's reaction to this threat in this search for a positive and distinct social identity. Cairns in his study on conflict in Northern Ireland argues that "a threat to the positive nature of the group's identity is seen as a personal threat," and that devaluation of the "out-group" is not necessary in this reaction.[144] This flies in the face of most theories on terrorist conflict. These include those previously discussed, such as hatred of the enemy, perceived injustices, and material possessions. Individuals can be moved towards violence in response to political events that affect their group even though the events might not affect the individual directly.[145] There are, however, various levels of action that individuals can take in

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[140] Moghaddam, *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context*, 102.

[141] R. Brown and G. Ross, "The Battle for Acceptance: An Investigation into the Dynamics of Intergroup Behaviour," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Tajfel, Vol. 7 (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982).,158.

[142] McCauley, *Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism*, 13–31.

[143] Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy,* 26–28.

[144] E. Cairns, "Intergroup Conflict in Northern Ireland," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Tajfel, Vol. 7 (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982)., 294.

[145] McCauley and Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*, Kindle location 516.

response to a threat to their "in-group." McCauley argues that the level of action an individual chooses is likely a result of the trajectory of their radicalization. Which is, as we have shown earlier, not consistent across cultures.[146]

III. METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The research problem is one that will apply the theory of social identity and intergroup relations to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. Questions and concepts derived from a thorough literature review were used to provide an initial list of conceptual areas that will be investigated, and give ideas for theoretical sampling.[147] This researcher utilized a qualitative research framework for the purpose of discovering the prevailing concepts and relationships that can be found in the study of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. Furthermore, this thesis used inductive research while utilizing the principles of Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Relations Theory in an attempt to develop a framework that can be used to better understand the social and cultural conditions needed to exist, and could therefore allow suicide terrorism to occur within the United States.

Brannan, Esler, and Strindberg challenge the researcher to utilize an independent framework involving "primary sources," applied in the context of cultural differences when studying terrorism.[148] A research approach that takes the descriptive details from a storyteller, in this case a suicide bomber, who is trying to persuade, convince, express, and portray images, can be utilized to satisfy this challenge and act as a basic foundation to developing this framework.[149] This type of research called for a grounded theory approach to investigating this phenomenon.

A. GROUNDED THEORY

A grounded theory study, which is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process, is likely to offer insight, enhance understanding,

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[147] Juliet M. Corbin, Anselm L. Strauss, and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008), 379. 53.

[148] David W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler, and N. T. A. Strindberg, "Talking to "Terrorists": Towards an Independent Analytical Framework for the Study of Violent Substate Activism," *Studies in Conflict &Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (01, 2001), 3, 19.

[149] Corbin, Strauss, and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 379, 18.

and provide a meaningful guide to action.[150] The process of developing a grounded theory study begins with two basic principles: Asking questions and making comparisons. The object is to become sensitive to the properties that might pertain to the phenomena of suicide terrorism that otherwise might not be noticed without a proper understanding of Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Relations Theory.[151] A concept that is central to Social Identity Theory is the assumption that the individual is motivated to achieve a positive and distinct identity.[152] Explicit statements taken from the transcripts of "successful" suicide bombers allowed this researcher to develop the sensitivity needed to identify these concepts in their statements. A positive and distinct identity is not an idea that is fixed inside an individual's head but should be viewed "as a set of collaborative social practices that vary depending on the context."[153] These practices can vary from culture to culture and can take many forms. For instance, this research identified that one way the Islamic suicide terrorist seeks to achieve a positive identity through their acts of suicide terrorism is by attaining an improvement in the eyes of Allah.

It is difficult, however, to determine if the information attained in these transcripts actually reflects the thoughts of the suicide terrorist, or if the information serves the propaganda purposes of the terrorist organization. It is important to address this methodological problem, since it has the chance of biasing the research. Researchers do believe, however, that this bias can be marginal.[154] This bias would be marginal, if the practice of obtaining a positive and distinct identity were viewed as "an individual trying to position oneself in relation to others, to achieve a particular presentation of oneself," or

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[150] Corbin, Strauss, and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 12.

[151] Ibid., 82.

[152] F. M. Moghaddam, "Interobjectivity: The Collective Roots of Individual Consciousness and Social Identity," in *Individuality and the Group: Advances in Social Identity*, eds. T. Postmes and J. JettenSage Publications Ltd, 2006), 159.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 124.

to be like others.[155] In other words, the group in which the individuals are positioning themselves could determine the criteria for which the individual measures the value of a positive and distinct identity.

The researcher began his data search, by collecting transcripts of video testaments or "farewell videos" of suicide bombers. These transcripts were pulled from two main sources, the SITE Intelligence Group (SITE) and the World News Connection (WNC) websites. The SITE Intelligence Group (SITE) has studied, monitored, and tracked global jihadist groups for a decade. The SITE database contains hundreds of video clips from suicide bombers. In addition, the World News Connection (WNC) website monitors global media and also contains numerous video clips from suicide bombers and their families. The collection of data was limited to suicide bombers with a connection to a terrorist organization that operated in the Middle East region of the world. It should be noted that the collection of data was limited to the Middle East region, due to the availability and consistency with which groups in that region made suicide 'farewell videos,' and the lack of open source videos from other regions, such as Southeast Asia and Central Asia.

The researcher began the process of coding the data by performing open coding, axial coding, developing paradigms, and selective coding techniques. The use of memos and diagrams helped in the integration of concepts. In order to gain a fuller understanding of this phenomenon, concepts relating to a positive and distinct identity were identified from these videos, grouped into categories and compared across all categories. The analysis continually attempted to identify ideas and new concepts that emerged from the data, and classified and compared these to other categories. This framework used the techniques of developing paradigms, coding, and integration of concepts. For example, the researcher created a paradigm that displayed the properties of a positive and distinct identity, and identified codes for each of the properties.

The researcher used theoretical sampling of the data until reaching a point of theoretical saturation. Theoretical sampling means that data sampling evolves during the

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[155] Moghaddam, "Interobjectivity: The Collective Roots of Individual Consciousness and Social Identity," 159.

process, rather than predetermined prior to the research. Theoretical saturation occurs when no new data seems to emerge relating to each category of the phenomenon.[156] In addition, the use of triangulation strategies to counterbalance data sets can be helpful to this research. For example, data sources in this research included the literature review, statements of suicide bombers, and observations of this phenomenon in the media. For example, this research relied on data obtained from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's (START) Global Terrorism Database and the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (CPOST). This thesis used observations of past events and a content analysis of press and news accounts found in the START and CPOST database to provide a method of refining existing theoretical concepts.

In the end, a deeper understanding of this phenomenon emerged and allowed the researcher to use these results as a guide to understanding suicide terrorism within the context of social identity theory and intergroup relations. Furthermore, a framework was developed that could be analyzed and used to better understand the phenomenon of suicide terrorism and the social conditions necessary for a campaign of suicide terrorism to exist in the United States.

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[156] Juliet M. Corbin, Anselm L. Strauss, and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008), 202.

IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. ANALYSIS

Suicide terrorism is a process that operates simultaneously on three different levels, the individual bomber, the society that supports him, and the organizations that make use of the tactic.[157] (Figure 1.) This process is part of a unique cultural strategy that forms as part of a collection of individuals into an integrated entity called an organization. Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel describe the Cultural School of strategy in their book, *Strategy Safari, A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management.* This strategy is rooted in the "social force of culture" and is very concerned with the maintaining strategic stability and actively resists change.[158]
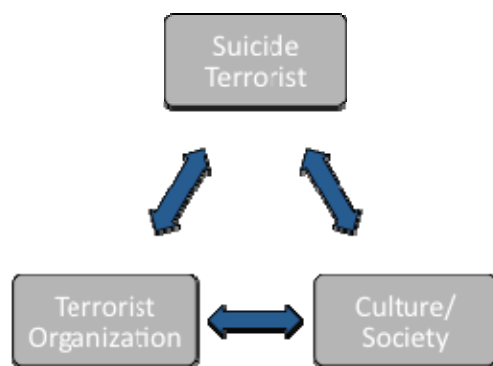
Source: Adapted from Jeffrey W. Lewis. The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012)

Figure 1.   The Dynamics of Suicide Terrorism

The Culture School associates organizational culture with collective cognition or, "the shared beliefs that are reflected in traditions and habit as well as more tangible manifestations-stories, symbols, even building and products."[159] These shared beliefs are
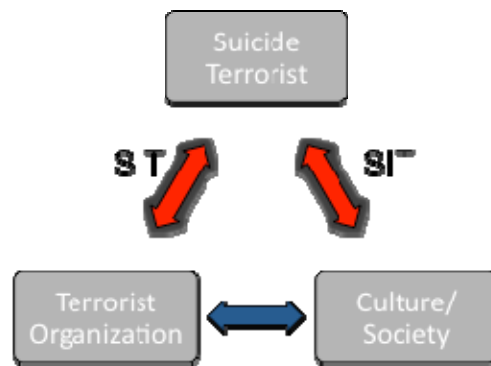
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[157] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 17.

[158] Henry Mintzberg, Bruce W. Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 406., kindle location 3942.

[159] Ibid., kindle location 3976.

what suicide terrorist organizations utilize to distinguish themselves from others. It is these beliefs that create the foundation on which individuals base their valuation of their contribution to the group. A central premise of the Cultural School strategy is that individuals acquire beliefs through a process of acculturation, or socialization and is reinforced by formal indoctrination.[160]

This research will be directed towards two integral parts to this system. The first is the link between the suicide terrorist and the society that supports them, and the second is the link between the suicide terrorist and the organization that makes use of them. This research set out to find if these links could be better understood by utilizing social identity theory and intergroup relations theory as a framework for analysis. (Figure 2.)

Source: Adapted from Jeffrey W. Lewis, The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012)

Figure 2.   SIT as a Framework for Analysis

Social Identity Theory holds that individuals are motivated to achieve a positive and distinct identity and that these self-concepts are derived from their participation in groups and their knowledge of outside groups. These self-concepts and relationships play a very large role in the development, interaction, and actions of suicide terrorists and the societies and organizations that support them. Any efforts to better understand the phenomenon of suicide terrorism and possibly develop strategies to preclude suicide

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[160] Henry Mintzberg, Bruce W. Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 406, kindle location 4004.

terrorism from occurring should have knowledge of the unique cultural process and concept of achieving a positive and distinct identity. The study of suicide terrorism must look outside its traditional concepts of analysis and try and identify alternative methods that take into consideration these types of collective processes.

Finding these concepts in the statements of suicide terrorist farewell testaments was the goal of this research. The researcher developed a paradigm or model on which to base the analysis of the statements of the suicide bombers. (Table 1.) This paradigm was developed to identify a basic concept of Social Identity Theory, an individual's knowledge that he belongs to a group, and that there is a value significance placed on that membership.[161] There is a strong motivation on the part of the individual to assume that the value placed on their membership to the group is positive in nature and might even reinterpret as positive those characteristics seen as negative by outside groups.[162] There is also a need for this value to assume distinctiveness from other groups. In-groups compete against out-groups not because there is any realistic conflict, but to differentiate them and maintain a positive identity.[163]

Model Used to Code Positive and Distinct Indicators in Statements	
Positiveness Indicator	P1 – Expressions of affirmation or agreement
	P2 – Showing optimism and confidence
	P3 – Showing gain or improvement
Distinctiveness Indicator	D1 – Recognizable different in nature than something of a similar type

Table 1.   Model to Code Positive and Distinct Indicators

For instance, Islamic communities are experiencing an identity crisis. This identity crisis has the following features: Crisis taking place in the middle of political,

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[161] J. Turner, "Towards a Cognitive Redifinition of the Social Group," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Tajfel, Vol. 7Cambridge Univ Pr, 1982), 18.

[162] Ibid., 28.

[163] Ibid., 34.

economic and cultural changes. Muslim youths are searching for direction for a better tomorrow. Importation of western ideals has led many youth in Islamic societies to be attracted to western ideals. This leads many to fill an identity void by moving towards Islamic fundamentalism.[164] This research therefore examined statements made from Middle Eastern Islamic suicide terrorists and utilized a paradigm created to identify characteristics that would indicate in their statements, the desire to attain a positive and distinct identity.

B.   FINDINGS

Abu-Huzaifah al-Yamani, a suicide bomber who used a car bomb to destroy a bridge in Badush, Iraq on May 16, 2007, [165] stated in his last will and testament,

> And the prophet of God, peace and God's prayers be on him, said: 'If I intend to invade for the sake of God and I get killed, then I invade and get killed, then I invade.' So, my dear nation, this is great proof to die as a martyr for the sake of god, so stand up to protect your religion and defend your honor, as I have decide to make this bridge ruins for the sake of God, for you [nation], and for your honor," and "As Ali, may god be pleased with him, said: 'A group is better than one.' And to the amir of the believers, I love you more than I love life, and to my people and particularly my mother, my ever lasting love, I bid you farewell and do not be afraid and think of me being with god as we will meet in paradise, God willing.[166]

Al-Yamani expresses affirmation of his belief in the good of dying for the sake of god, collective action, and his defense of the honor of his nation. He is also optimistic in his life after death.

In April, 2007, two suicide truck bombs killed nine U.S. soldiers and wounded 20 in Diyala Province, Iraq.[167] The suspected perpetrators Abu Hafs al-Ansari and Abu

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[164] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy (*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 37–38.

[165] "CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism " http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search_results.php (accessed 9/3/2012, 2012)., *Al-Furqan Statement, Video of Third Edition of 'Knights of Martyrdom'.* (Washington, DC: World News Connection, [2008]).

[166] Ibid.

[167] *CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism.*

Othman al-Ansari urge other Muslims to follow their example. Hafs al-Ansari stated in his last will and testament,

> The Qur'an tells us to follow Allah and the instructions of His Prophet, and do not argue so you do not fail and your efforts go to waste with the wind, and be patient because Allah is with the patient people. Brothers in Islam, you must resist…..resistance, resistance…..and bonding, bonding. Victory is imminent with the permission of Allah.[168]

Othman al-Ansari stated in his last will and testament,

> Brothers in Islam, I undertake this blessed suicidal operation. Nothing really is bothering me in this world, but I am just anxious to serve my god and support Him. How can we enjoy living when Islam was insulted and honors were violated, women were raped, and men and children were killed, and the prisons of the infidels were filled with the people of Tawhid and the swords of the apostates are placed on the necks of the worshipers…after all that how can we enjoy living? Our course is jihad and martyrdom, and our souls are cheap for the Cause of Allah. Glory is to Allah and to the Muslims.[169]

Hafs al-Ansari expresses affirmation and confidence in his belief that his efforts will not go to waste. He derives a positive identification from this confidence. He also believes that victory is imminent and that his efforts of resisting and bonding with his in-group will be the key to gaining victory. Othman al-Ansari's statement shows optimism that he is fighting for the honor of those that are violated, including women and children. This gives Othman al-Ansari a positive cause for which he is correcting a perceived wrong. He affirms his belief in martyrdom and states he is willing to sacrifice his soul for the cause of Allah.

Abu Khattab al-Ansari, Abu Azzam al-Muhajir, and Abu al-Walid al-Shami make statements in a video that purports to claim responsibility for a dual bombing in August, 2006 in Mosul, Al-Ramadi, Iraq. Khattab al-Ansari states in his last will and testament,

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[168] *Second Entry in the Al-Furquan Foundation/Islamic State of Iraq Series, "the Knights of Martyrdom" - Dual Suicide Bombing on an American Base in Diyala.* (Washington, DC: Site Institute - The search for international terrorist entities, [2007]).

[169] Ibid.

He who is in Iraq knows very well that victory is imminent and the liberation of this land will soon happen. Allah had promised and Allah keeps His promise. Here is America stumbling before the strikes of the Mujahideen.

The other 'Hezbollah' that supported the Americans and the Shi'ites and participated in the establishment of this collaborator government in the call for the formation the idolater guards, the apostate police…we say to it that the real fire has not reached you yet, but there is a day awaiting for you very soon….

And we send a message to the sheikhs of the tribes and we say: the defense of the land and the honor is a legal duty imposed on every Muslim; no one is allowed to linger in the fulfillment of this duty instead of helping the enemy such as the joining of the Islamic party and similar issues, like those who accepted shoes worn by those infidels.[170]

Khattab al-Ansari confirms his optimism and confidence that victory is near and distinguishes his in-group from the American out-group. In addition, he places a value on the distinctiveness between his group and a competitor 'Shi'ite' group. His cause is in support of the 'defense of the land,' and it is an 'honor' that is the 'legal duty' of every Muslim. This duty gives him positive feeling of self-worth and authenticity in his actions. Azzam al-Muhajir states in his last will and testament,

A message, a message to all those who thought that the suicidal people have killed themselves running away from the reality of the world. Really they went to a new life with the permission of the One and Only; a life of what was never seen or swayed the mind of any human. Let it be understood to all the scholars in the Arabian Peninsula and in all the Arab countries that we are coming just like what that brother had said. We are coming with the suicidal operations, with the fighter, the ones who are going on foot, and with the suicidal people, and with the permission of Allah, the call for prayer will be held from Washington to Russia.[171]

You saw the women getting raped but the manhood is for those who say, here I am in Baghdad, here I am in Fallujah, here I am in Afghanistan,

    170 *"The Knights of Martyrdom" - the First Entry in a Series from Al-Furqan Foundation of the Islamic State of Iraq.* (Washington, DC: Site Institute - The search for international terrorist entities, [2007]).

    171 *"The Knights of Martyrdom" - the First Entry in a Series from Al-Furqan Foundation of the Islamic State of Iraq.* (Washington, DC: Site Institute - The search for international terrorist entities, [2007]).

here I am in Chechnya. But I swear if you do not get up, Allah will bring other to support His religion.[172]

Al Muhajir comments on common perceptions about suicide bombers. His comments suggest that he is seeking a better life, not running from his old life. Moreover, his comments suggest that he is seeking to improve his manhood by taking action in defense of women. Al-Walid al-Shami states in his last will and testament,

> I send a message to those who are working for the support of the religion: fear Allah and peruse His course, you are on the road of glory and dignity. It is the road to win paradise and to gain the acceptance of Allah. May Allah protect you and your leaders everywhere. In the Name of Allah, the best jihad for the Sake of Allah is the suicidal operation. The breaking of the enemy is to be done by the suicidal operations; it is the easiest way to paradise.[173]

Al-Walid al-Shami's comments identify an understanding that his actions will lead to a positive improvement in his life. He believes that he will gain 'glory and dignity', 'win paradise', and 'gain the acceptance of Allah'. He is confident that suicide operations are the best way to distinguish victory over the out-group.

On September 15, 2006, two suicide bombing attacks by vehicle occurred against oil refineries in Dubba Port and Mareb, Yemen.[174] Four suicide bombers were involved.[175] In a video, which claimed responsibility for the attack, the suicide bombers were identified as Shafik Ahmed Omar Zayd, Hashim Khalid al-Iraqi, Omar Bin Sayd Gar Allah, and Ahmend Muhammadal-Abiyad.[176] Omar Zayd states in his last will and testament, he is "wishing to free the servants [of Allah] from servitude which is not servitude towards the Lord of His servants." "Even if they have planes, Allah is above them." "We are the ones assisting in the killing of Muslims. We are the ones who

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[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] "Global Terrorism Database," http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/ (accessed 9/3/2012).

[175] "Lebanonwire.Com | Five Killed as Yemen Foils Suicide Attacks on Oil Plants," http://www.lebanonwire.com/0609MLN/06091538MAF.asp (accessed 9/3/2012).

[176] *"Badr Al-Yemen" - Video from Al-Qaeda in Yemen Featuring the Suicide Bombers Who Struck Oil Facilite in Hadramout and Ma'Arib - Part One* (Bethesda, MD: Site Intelligence Group,[2007]).; *"Badr Al-Yemen" - Video from Al-Qaeda in Yemen Featuring the Suicide Bombers Who Struck Oil Facilite in Hadramout and Ma'Arib - Part Two* (Bethesda, MD: Site Intelligence Group, [2007]).

appointed these apostate rulers…and obeyed them blindly." "Who else will help us, rulers serving as agents?" "Well, you're either with the cross or with the Mujahideen."[177]

Omar Zayd's statement displays his confidence in his work to free people from 'servitude.' He distinguishes those out-groups that are hurting the cause from those that are helping the cause. Khalid al-Iraqi states in his last will and testament that the ruling class is "forsaking the Sunnah in their parliaments…" Syd Gar Allah states in his last will and testament, that local governments are agents of the Americans "and its so-called War on Terror." Muhammadal-Abiyad states in his last will and testament, "Are you not Arabs? Are you not the desendants of the heroes?" "The day before yesterday it was Palesitne and Afghanistan, yesterday it was Iraq, today it is Lebanon and tomorrow – Syria?"[178] Each of these statements identifies an opportunity for the in-group to distinguish itself from the out-group. Each individual tries to also distinguish the positive actions of the in-group versus the negative actions of the out-group.

The Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for a May 2007 suicide car bombing that killed 12 Iraqi police officers in Samarra, Iraq.[179] A video claiming responsibility for the attack identified Abu Jafar al-Yemeni as the attacker.[180] Al-Yemeni states in his last will and testament, "He is doing this operation for the Cause of Allah." In another video claiming responsibility for a car bombing on Kurdish forces in Mosul, Iraq, Abu al-Bara'a al-Shami states in his last will and testament, "For the victory of the religion of Allah, I will carry out this operation which Allah has decided that should be completely for His satisfaction. Victory will be for Allah, if He so wishes."[181] Al-Yemeni's and al-Shami's comments affirm their belief that they are taking this action for

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[177] *"Badr Al-Yemen" - Video from Al-Qaeda in Yemen Featuring the Suicide Bombers Who Struck Oil Facilite in Hadramout and Ma'Arib - Part One.*

[178] *"Badr Al-Yemen" - Video from Al-Qaeda in Yemen Featuring the Suicide Bombers Who Struck Oil Facilite in Hadramout and Ma'Arib - Part Two*

[179] "CPOST - Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism" http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search_results.php (accessed 9/3/2012, 2012).

[180] *"The Attack of Rubaie Bin A'Amer" - Video from the Islamic State of Iraq of an Operation Targeting a Police Department Building in Samarra* (Bethesda, MD: Site Intelligence Group,[2007]).

[181] *"A Suicide Bombing in Al-Mosul" - A Presentation of the Preparation, Will Declaration, and Execution of a Suicide Operation by Ansar Al-Sunnah* (Washington, DC: Site Institute - The search for international terrorist entities, [2007]).

a higher cause and shows optimism that they will receive a positive gain from their actions.

Abu Usama Al-Madani, a suicide bomber who carried out an operation against a police post in Tikrit, Iraq, states in his last will and testament,

> I say to my mujahidin brothers from other groups: unite in this Islamic country that was established in the Land of Two Rivers. Do not let it down after all these sacrifices and do not let your enemies celebrate. Unite your ranks as God has ordered us and stay on the right path. I say to you, heaven is where we will meet. Peace. Glory be to God, his prophet, and the faithful but hypocrites do not know.[182]

Al Madani identifies a need to unite groups together in conflict with a common out-group. He shows optimism that his in-group is 'on the right path'. Moreover, he shows positive affirmation in his belief that he will gain acceptance into heaven.

This research was able to find numerous expressions of affirmation from the suicide bombers that their actions were in some way taken for a cause larger than themselves. In addition, the suicide bombers showed optimism and confidence that their chosen path would lead to a greater place for themselves in the afterlife. All these concepts were found within the context of the suicide bomber gaining or improving from their actions. Moreover, calls for group action were found in the statements. The suicide bombers pleaded with the members of their in-group to unite and bond for the cause. In addition, the suicide bombers detailed the distinctiveness between the in-group and the out-groups. This research was able to identify characteristics in the statements of the suicide bombers that indicate that they desire to attain a positive and distinct identity from their participation in suicide terrorism missions.

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[182] *Forum Member Posts 'Knights of Martyrdom 5' Showing Final Statements of 'Martyrs'.* (Washington, DC: World News Connection, [2008]).

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V. DISCUSSION

Knowing the other and knowing oneself,
In one hundred battles no danger.
Not knowing the other and knowing oneself,
One victory for one loss.
Not knowing the other and not knowing oneself,
In every battle certain defeat.[183]

Traditional discussions of suicide terrorism attempt to search for causes and effects of the phenomenon on society. This cause and effect model facilitates law enforcement and military methods of counterterrorism that focus on the response and/or prevention aspects of terrorism. Moreover, there is a concern with the adversarial relationship between the researcher and the terrorism research subjects and the interdependent relationship between the research of terrorism and the counterterrorism community.[184] The research of terrorism, and specifically for this research the study of suicide terrorism, needs to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon uncovered though sociological models. This effort is in the greater interest to more effectively defend against terror attacks, not to defend terrorists or terrorism as somehow right or justified.[185]

An "alternative normative account" will understand individual choices not caused by external forces, but as a choice that is regulated by norms and rules of the normative system a person feels is "appropriate in cultural context."[186] Individuals do have free will to choose paths of action, however, in some instances the situational factors make one

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[183] The Denma Translation Group Sunzi, *The Art of War: The Denma Translation* [Sunzi bing fa.] (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), XII.

[184] David W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler, and N. T. A. Strindberg, "Talking to "Terrorists": Towards an Independent Analytical Framework for the Study of Violent Substate Activism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (01, 2001), 5.

[185] David W. Brannan and N. T. Anders Strindberg, "Critical Analysis of Terrorism and Terrorist Groups: A Handbook for Practitioners." Unpublished Research, 28.

[186] F. M. Moghaddam, "Interobjectivity: The Collective Roots of Individual Consciousness and Social Identity," in *Individuality and the Group: Advances in Social Identity*, eds. T. Postmes and J. JettenSage Publications Ltd, 2006), 156.

path more likely.[187] For example, in the United States, if you want to be involved in a group, there are ample opportunities to participate with an athletic team. You can join the football, baseball, or tennis team in High School or find another local team and participate. These options are not universally available across the United States, but in a large part of the country, present a very powerful way for individuals to create a positive and distinct identity for themselves. Sports and athletics are a very large part of the culture in the United States. There are also, however, an abundance of alternative group options that take the form of gangs or other criminal enterprises that can be attractive to individuals.

Moghaddam argues that in any given context, an individual has several "normative systems within which to think and act incorrectly or correctly." Moreover, he concludes that Social Identity Theory is compatible with a cultural perspective of the discussion of individuals and their choice of actions, and that predictability in behavior arises because most of the time people behave according to the dominant normative system in their culture.[188] In mono-group societies, individuals follow the norms of one or two groups in society. Multi-group societies are founded on a diverse group of lifestyles.[189] This has important implications for how individuals express themselves and view their personal freedoms. In multi-group societies, such as those found in the United States, individuals have many more opportunities to achieve a positive and distinct identity within their group interaction than in other mono-group societies. This is a perceived advantage to the United States in the development of groups or individuals that might choose suicide terrorism as a course of action. The perception of the United States as a multi-group society can be a limiting factor in the development of suicide terrorists; however, it might have other identity weaknesses.

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[187] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy (*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 11.

[188] Moghaddam, *Interobjectivity: The Collective Roots of Individual Consciousness and Social Identity*, 156–157.

[189] Ibid., 161.

A. THE AMERICAN DREAM

American identity is a very powerful concept. Even in the worst parts of the country, you will find a strong national pride. America draws millions to its borders because it offers the "Land of opportunity" and a place where "anybody can make it." The "power of the American dream" can drive society and contribute to the success of the economy; however, this does not mean that all of the assumptions that form the foundation of this dream are correct.[190] Moghaddam argues that this "American Dream" assumes that there is an exceptionally high level of social mobility in the United States, but that income disparity between the rich and the poor in the United States disputes this assumption. This can be an example of a dominant culture concept that influences individual perceptions.[191] Individuals become frustrated with their situations and turn to alternative means to achieve their positive and distinct identity.

Most important in this discussion is the choice of resistance within a society. Individuals who choose resistance are linked to the "complex social networks they encounter."[192] Ideologies that spur resistance are formed from these network's "social roles, norms and cues."[193] Some individual characteristics can play a role in suicide terrorism. As noted earlier in this research, there is no known profile of a suicide terrorist. An important trend, however, is the use of unmarried males from late teenage to early twenties. Suicide terrorism can be viewed as a form of "rebellious risk-taking behavior" that can be seen in young single males in the United States and other Western societies.[194] Can this behavior play a factor in the achievement of identity in the United States?

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[190] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy (*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 87.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 53.

[193] Ibid.

[194] F. M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy (*Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 25.

B.   CULTURE OF HONOR

The attraction of young males to risk-taking behavior can move individuals to radical action and resistance.[195] Two important points need to be discussed in this context of individual's interactions with their society and the resultant behavior. The disenfranchised, marginalized, young, and restless are more likely to engage in violence and risk taking for thrill and status.[196] Violence is much more prevalent among young men, including those in the United States.

In his 2008 book, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell analyzes individual success stories or people he calls "Outliers." He examines patterns behind certain everyday phenomena that affect the lives of these "Outliers" and makes them successful. He utilizes a framework that discounts "individual personal choices and actions in isolation" and attempts to understand how culture, family, and friends make a difference in people's lives and actions.[197]

The culture of honor phenomenon attempts to look at violence from a broader perspective and discounts an individual's personal choices or actions. Gladwell frames his interpretation of the culture of honor by describing the violent feuds between families in late nineteenth century Kentucky. The culture of honor hypothesis states that, one is willing to fight in response to a challenge to ones reputation. This is because a man's reputation is at the center of his self-worth.[198] Gladwell relates that this culture of honor is a learned process that is passed down through generations. He explains that it is present in Kentucky and most of the southern United States, due to the earliest settlers of that region being from marginally fertile highland areas, such as Scotland. Herdsmen, who tended sheep and raised goats, typically inhabited these areas. Herdsmen typically have more difficulty completing their work and have to be aggressive. People who were from

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[195] C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford University Press, 2011), kindle location 1208–1210.

[196] Ibid., kindle location 1295–1300.

[197] Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2008), Kindle location 134.

[198] Ibid,, location 2014.

lawless areas also inhabited this area. They were clannish and responded by forming tight family bonds. All these factors contributed to the culture of honor phenomenon in the U.S. South.[199]

Further evidence of Gladwell's culture of honor framework is found in additional research studies. A research study conducted by Cohen and Nisbett also argued that the U.S. South possesses a version of the culture of honor. A man who is insulted by another and does not retaliate risks having his reputation tarnished. Their conclusion found that this culture of honor is responsible for a good deal of violence in the South.[200] In addition, a research study by Brown, Osterman and Barnes, argued that high schools in culture of honor states had twice as many school shootings per capita as nonculture of honor states. They also concluded that many acts of school violence result from retaliatory aggression in response to social identity threats.[201] Finally, two studies by Barnes, Brown and Tamborski examined the hypothesis that risk taking, which provides social proof of strength, would be higher in culture of honor states and that risk taking would result in higher accidental deaths. This research concluded that culture of honor states exhibited higher rates of accidental death among whites.[202]

Evidence of a culture of honor is also present in other areas of the world that has seen instances of suicide terrorism. In Nancy Dupree's research on "Cultural heritage and national identity in Afghanistan," she writes that honor is very important in the Afghan culture and family is an important institution in Afghan society.[203] Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union in December of 1979. Essential to Afghan life during this

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[199] Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2008), 166.

[200] D. Cohen et al., "Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An "Experimental Ethnography" RID B-3591-2008," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 5 (MAY, 1996), 945–960.

[201] Ryan P. Brown, Lindsey L. Osterman, and Collin D. Barnes, "School Violence and the Culture of Honor," *Psychological Science* 20, no. 11 (NOV, 2009), 1400–1405.

[202] Collin D. Barns, Ryan P. Brown, and Michael Tamborski, "Living Dangerously: Culture of Honor, Risk-Taking, and the Nonrandomness of "Accidental" Deaths," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 1, no. 8 (2011), 9/1/2011.

[203] N. H. Dupree, "Cultural Heritage and National Identity in Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (OCT, 2002), 977–989.

period was the ability to uphold family honor while maintaining a good reputation with the foreigners who surrounded them.[204] Following this event, the Afghan people suffered at the hands of the Taliban, who attempted to diminish the social identity of the country.[205] Over a period of about thirty years, the Afghan people endured the traumas of war, inept governments, and an enormous disruption to their cultural identity.[206] These cultural conditions could contribute to a diminished feeling of self-worth.

This research has created a framework to better understand why individuals choose suicide terrorism as a course of action. One aspect of this framework is to determine if the culture of honor phenomenon exists within the framework of social identity and intergroup relations theory and could therefore assist in the development of those who choose to participate in terrorist activities in the United States.

Knowledge of how the culture of honor could play a role in terrorism would help homeland security officials identify at-risk individuals and address issues that influence them. In addition, an understanding of culture of honor and social identity could help local law enforcement be effective at changing social thinking and assist those who are at-risk to better understand alternatives to violence. The culture of honor phenomenon can be an important primer in the study of suicide terrorism and can be included in the framework that is developed by this research to better understand this complex social phenomenon.

C. THE SPREAD OF INNOVATION

Could there be factors that preclude suicide terrorism from being a course of action chosen by the risk-taking young males and flourishing in countries such as United States? An analysis of United States homegrown violent jihadist activity suggests that the group has "little stomach for suicide operations" and "lack an understanding of bomb

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[204] N. H. Dupree, "Cultural Heritage and National Identity in Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (OCT, 2002), 984.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., 986.

making."[207] For suicide terrorism to take off in a new context, numerous factors must fall into place simultaneously. United States homeland security community must recognize "the multiple ways that the failure of suicide bombing can be encouraged as well as prudence in action so to not inadvertently facilitate its acceptance."[208]

In the spread of innovations, utility is an important factor in determining whether a technology is transferred from one society or culture to the next. Likewise, suicide bombing does not automatically flow from one society to the next without a local modification that will adapt the technology to the norms and constrains of the new society.[209] Lewis argues that compatibility is the extent to which a technology is consistent with a particular set of cultural or social norms. Is this tactic compatible with a group's perceived needs? Is the tactic a better solution for individuals seeking a way to create a positive and distinct identity?[210] When society does not support the strategy or the individual is not motivated or sees an alternative means to get what he or she desires, the compatibility of suicide terrorism with a group's strategy might not be present. The strategies for precluding this technology from taking hold in the United States must be consistent with an understanding of the dynamics of the role individuals have in society.

D.   STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SUICIDE TERRORISM

It is important to distinguish between the different responses and strategies to deter suicide terrorism. Pedahzur created a model in which short-term responses whose aim is to protect the population from suicide attacks in the middle of a campaign is contrasted with long-term responses that are meant to address the root causes of terrorism.[211] Short-term responses are those small-scale operations aimed at the terrorist organizations to prevent an attack that is already underway, or defensive strategies whose

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[207] J. P. Bjelopera, American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat, DIANE Publishing, 2010), 1–2.
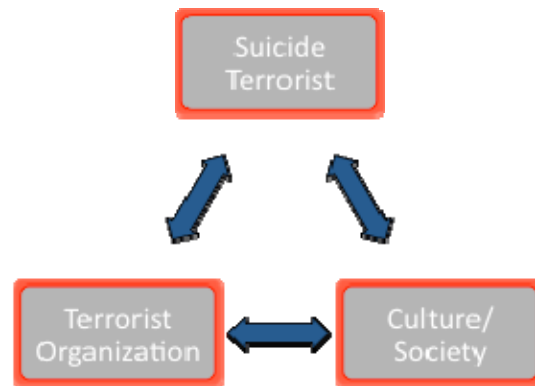
[208] Jeffrey W. Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, MD .: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 260.

[209] Ibid., 117.

[210] Ibid., 119.

[211] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 190.

goal is to minimize consequences of an attack. Long-term responses hope to reduce an organizations interest in initiating attack by eradicating the terrorist group's infrastructure or undertaking efforts to meet the demands of the group and reduce support for violent activities.[212] While these methods of deterrence are necessary in certain instances, they concentrate on individual parts of the dynamic cycle that allows suicide terrorism to occur (Figure 3).

Source: Adapted from Jeffrey W. Lewis, The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012)

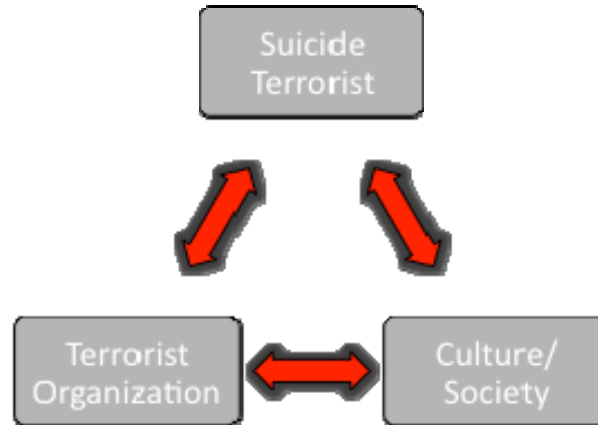Figure 3.   Traditional Suicide Terrorism Deterrence Strategies

Research by Davis and Jenkins, however, seeks to expand and broaden the concept of deterrence to encompass "influence operations," and might offer a better opportunity for researchers and counterterrorism officials to develop strategies based on the framework developed in this research. These efforts of influence range from co-optation to deterring terrorists by destroying or "crushing" them.[213] In an expanded study, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism (START) organized the comprehensive theoretical knowledge applicable to Davis and Jenkins concept of influencing violent extremist organizations and assessed the support

212 Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 190–195.

213 Paul K. Davis, *Deterrence & Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), 86. 9.

for their assertions.[214] Of the many interesting assessments in the study, one in particular is most relevant to this discussion. The study concludes with high confidence that "Groups and individuals prefer to have an optimal level of uniqueness and distinctiveness; a group that is similar will threaten the group's distinctiveness which may prompt intergroup issues." This distinctiveness threat is a type of threat related to Social Identity Theory and the START research concludes that there are multiple quantitative analyses supporting this hypothesis. Furthermore, the study stated that the empirical results would hold true in the context of influencing violent extremist organizations.[215]

The implications of this research should support the idea of developing strategies to combat the proliferation of suicide terrorism, by fully understanding the effect of Social Identity and Intergroup Relations Theories on individual and group conduct. This can best be accomplished by viewing suicide terrorism as a complex system, and concentrating efforts to preclude suicide terrorism from flourishing in the United States by developing strategies that direct efforts at the connections of the elements. (Figure 4.)

Source: Adapted from Jeffrey W. Lewis. The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012)

Figure 4.   Interactive Elements of Suicide Terrorism

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[214] "START, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism, I-VEO Knowledge Matrix," http://start.foxtrotdev.com/about-project (accessed 9/11/2012, 2012).

[215] "'Ibid., Study 153. http://start.foxtrotdev.com (accessed 9/12/2012, 2012).

E. VIEWING SUICIDE TERRORISM THROUGH A COMPLEX SYSTEMS LENS

Davis and Jenkins agree with this complex systems framework analysis because, "The terrorist problem occurs in a rich context with many interacting entities and processes. Some aspects of the system are hierarchical; others are distributed; still others are networked. Terrorist systems adapt over time."[216] Adding to the complex nature of this analysis is that each of these different terrorist groups is competing with each other and might possess motivations that are not consistent across the board. Davis and Jenkins suggest that a systems approach means breaking down the system into parts and identifying the areas in which terrorist groups might be deterred or influenced.[217]

Meadows also agrees with this complex system analysis,

> On the one hand, we have been taught to analyze, to use our rational ability, to trace direct paths from cause to effect, to look at things in small and understandable pieces, to solve problems by acting on or controlling the world around us…. On the other hand, long before we were educated in rational analysis, we all dealt with complex systems. We are complex systems—our own bodies are magnificent examples of integrated, interconnected, self-maintaining complexity. Every person we encounter, every organization, every animal, garden, tree, and forest is a complex system.[218]

System problems, those that persist in spite of great analytical ability and technical ingenuity, are undesirable characteristics of the systems that produce them and will only be deterred by developing an understanding of the systems and a strategy to approach it.[219] Attempts to deter the proliferation of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism have seen both success and failure. Long- and short-term offensive and defensive

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[216] Paul K. Davis, *Deterrence & Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), 13.

[217] Ibid., 14–15.

[218] Donella H. Meadows and Diana Wright, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub., 2008), kindle location 236–241.

[219] Ibid., kindle location 251–279.

measures, such as those suggested by Pedahzur, can and should still be considered, but can be supplemented with a framework of understanding that views suicide terrorism as a complex adaptive system.

Meadows asks the researcher some questions in order to determine if what is being observed is a system:

Can you identify parts? … Yes, research has identified that the phenomenon of suicide terrorism is comprised of three parts, the individuals who blow themselves up, the organizations that direct the bomber, and the societies that provide support.

Do the parts affect each other? … Yes, research has identified, through the application of Social Identity and Intergroup Relations Theory to suicide terrorism, that individual and group behavior are affected by the value and emotional significance that is put into participation of the group.

Do the parts together produce an effect that is different from the effect of each part on its own? … Yes, it is the interactive nature of the parts that produces the phenomenon.

Does the effect, the behavior over time, persist in a variety of circumstances?... Yes, research has identified that the phenomenon of suicide terrorism has persisted over time and cultures.[220] The phenomenon of suicide terrorism is a complex systems problem.

Complex adaptive systems will continue to function even with complete changes to the elements, as long as the interactions among the elements remain the same. If the interactions of the elements change, however, the system can be greatly altered.[221] Reductionist thinking on the subject of suicide terrorism has lead to the belief that if the elements of the phenomenon, the individuals, organizations, and societies that support suicide terrorist operations, can be identified and eliminated, that suicide terrorism will be decreased. Systems thinking, on the other hand, will approach the proliferation of suicide

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[220] Donella H. Meadows and Diana Wright, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub., 2008), kindle location, kindle location 395–400.

[221] Ibid., kindle location 463.

terrorism by identifying the interactions among the elements, understanding the dynamics of the interactions, and developing strategies to redirect these interactions to other elements.

As an example, a system diagram of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism will assist in identifying a framework, developed through the application of social identity and intergroup relation theories to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, which could be used by U.S. homeland security officials to better understand the threat of suicide terrorism. A system's stock is the element or foundation of the system.[222] In the case of suicide terrorism, the stock would be the instances of suicide-bombing attacks. A feedback loop is formed when changes to the stock affect the inflow or outflow of the stock. Balancing feedback loops are equilibrating in a system and can be sources of stability or resistance. Reinforcing feedback loops are found whenever a system element is able to reproduce itself.[223] Balancing feedback loops constrain growth and reinforcing feedback loops feed growth. The inflow of potential suicide bombers is controlled by a perceived identity crisis and the presence of strong organizational ideology. The reinforcing growth of suicide terrorist attacks is the result of intergroup competition, the perceived gains in emotional value of identity attained from the attacks, and society's reinforcement of that emotional value. The balancing function of the system is the continuous death of the perpetrators (Figure 5).

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[222] Donella H. Meadows and Diana Wright, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub., 2008), kindle location, kindle location 490.

[223] Ibid., kindle location 630–736.
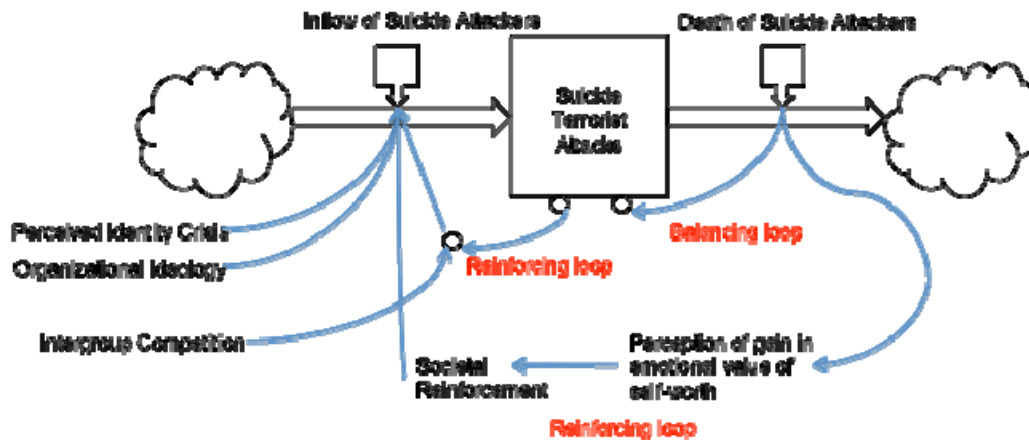
Source: Adapted from Meadows, Donella H. and Diana Wright. *Thinking in Systems: A Primer.* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub., 2008.)

Figure 5.   Suicide Terrorism viewed as a Complex System

In the diagram above, the clouds represent the boundary of the system for this discussion. There are no real boundaries for systems, however, because all systems are connected to other systems.[224] Suicide terrorism is a complex system within a complex system of terrorism. U.S. homeland security could use this systems framework for developing strategy to preclude a campaign of suicide terrorism from occurring on American soil.

F.   CONCLUSION - BLACK SWAN EVENTS

A campaign of suicide bombings in the United States lies outside of expectations. It would have an extreme impact on feelings of security, economy, resilience, and expectation of homeland security. It would cause a search for explanations after the fact, making it predictable and explainable. A sequence that is very similar to the events of September 11, 2001. Taleb defines these types of hard to predict, low probability-high consequence, retrospectively predictable events, as 'black swan' events.[225]

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[224] Donella H. Meadows and Diana Wright, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub., 2008), kindle location 1791–1846.

[225] Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2010), kindle location 377.

Taleb argues that human beings suffer from what is called the triplet of opacity. The illusion of understanding, thinking we know what is going on in a world that is more complicated than we realize; the retrospective distortion, assessing matters only after the fact, as if they were in a rearview mirror; and over valuing factual information and the handicap of authoritative and learned people, particularly when they create categories.[226] Traditional methods of studying suicide terrorism have attempted to draw linear causality conclusions to a complex growing phenomenon. Deterrence strategies have centered on the elements of the system instead of the interactive nature of the system itself. Experts in the field have developed convenient 'categories' in which to place the prevailing understandings of suicide terrorism. Suicide terrorism cannot be a 'Black Swan' event in the United States.

Through the identification of alternative normative accounts in the choices that individuals make, this research is able to identify the complex social conditions of suicide terrorism. The phenomenon is driven by powerful socio-cultural systems that prey on an individual's basic identity needs. The United States possesses many qualities that can balance this complex identity need in an individual, but there are factors that could change this dynamic, such as the identification of the culture of honor phenomenon in the United States. Suicide terrorism is an innovation that can be adopted within the correct social and cultural context. Homegrown radicalized citizens have not adopted this innovation within the United States yet, but a framework is necessary for homeland security officials to understand this complex system.

This research has developed the framework for understanding the phenomenon of suicide terrorism that can be used by homeland security officials to create policy to assist in preventing individuals from becoming radicalized toward violent extremism. This research did not provide an absolute solution to the proliferation of suicide terrorism, but helps to provide an understanding of the social positioning of citizens of the United States and the implications of social identity and intergroup relations theory on the proliferation of suicide terrorism.

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[226] Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2010), kindle location 737–747.

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